

2208 Pleasant Grove Rd
Lansing, MI 48910
June 13, 2012

Honorable Chairperson and Members of the Senate Agricultural Committee:

I write in support of Grant's Bills, S 423 and 424. Unfortunately, one of the most critical responsibilities of those who shelter and care for animals, is to provide the most humane death possible when euthanasia becomes necessary. Direct injection of the drug sodium pentobarbital (referred to as EBI, for euthanasia by injection) is accepted by all national veterinary and humane organizations as the most humane method currently available for euthanasia. When performed properly, EBI is painless and begins to take affect within seconds. The use of any other method of providing death—including the use of gas chambers—is unacceptable and the people of Michigan want EBI. The highest standards of care in providing the most humane euthanasia possible should be a requirement of anyone performing this task.

Gas chambers cannot be humanely used for old, sick, or injured animals. These animals usually have circulatory problems which delay death via carbon monoxide, causing them to experience significant distress prior to losing consciousness. Likewise, very young animals have physiological make-ups that render a humane death in a gas chamber impossible. And pregnant mothers die before her unborn babies, causing them to suffocate to death. Even under the best of circumstances, animals can only be gassed one at a time, and the 25 or more minutes it can take to end that animal's life can be agonizing.

Furthermore, carbon monoxide is highly toxic and, having no odor, color, or taste, has lead to shelter workers being injured and even killed by malfunctioning gas chambers. In addition, animals who must be placed into a small space like a gas chamber may become fearful and react more adversely than animals who are being gently restrained during EBI, thus increasing danger to shelter staff.

Recent studies have proven that EBI costs less than using a gas chamber and private grants will cover the transitional cost from the use of the chamber to EBI for the four shelters which continue to use this horrific method of euthanasia. Finally, these four aforementioned shelters already have an EBI back-up system and/or are trained in EBI procedures. Michigan law permits trained shelter technicians to directly administer euthanasia drugs without supervision by a veterinarian, and a majority of shelters are licensed to receive EBI drugs directly. And as stated previously, grants and training are available to help Michigan shelters in their transition to EBI.

It is maddening that, despite strong objections from citizens and the availability of humane alternatives, four Michigan county animal control shelters continue to use outdated gas chambers as the preferred method of death for our shelter animals. Statewide regulation is needed to ensure that all Michigan shelter pets and those procured by Class B dealers receive the same humane treatment if euthanasia is necessary. The people of Michigan demand no less.

Sincerely,

Lori J. Rumpf